ABSTRACT OF THE DISCLOSURE

A novel graphical user interface (GUI) using metadata, generates three-dimensional scatter plots (100, 200, 300, 400) for the efficient and aesthetic navigation and retrieval of pictures in a picture database. The first and second

5   dimensions (102, 104, 202, 204, 302, 304, 402, 404) represent abscissas and ordinates corresponding to two picture characteristics chosen by the user. Distinguishing characteristics of icons (108-126, 208-230, 308-326, 408-430) in the scatter plot (100, 200, 300, 400), which icons represent groups of pictures, indicate the third dimension, also chosen by the user. In the preferred embodiment,

10   the third dimension is indicated by the color of the icon (108-126, 208-230, 308-326, 408-430). Along with many other possibilities, the three dimensions of a scatter plot (100, 200, 300, 400) can represent combinations of "Who," "What," "When," "Where," and "Why" picture characteristic information contained in the picture metadata. Activating an icon (108-126, 208-230, 308-326, 408-430) pro-

15   duces a thumbnail of the pictures in the group represented by the particular icon (108-126, 208-230, 308-326, 408-430). Updating one display dimension dynamically updates the other display dimensions.